

BUSH REFUSES TO BUDGE FROM THE STATUS QUO IN IRAQ

(Mr. BRALEY of Iowa asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, last week President Bush told the American people that the status quo would continue in Iraq for 10 months. Last year, the American people demanded a change of course in Iraq. They wanted us to begin the process of bringing our troops home. The President's response: a troop escalation plan that sent an additional 30,000 troops to Iraq.

At the time, he said that if the Iraqi Government did not meet certain economic and political benchmarks, they would lose the support of our Nation. After months of delay, September became the moment of truth; and despite the fact that the nonpartisan GAO report found that the Iraqi Government had failed to fully meet 15 of the 18 benchmarks, the President said the troop escalation plan is going to continue until next summer.

Mr. Speaker, it is now clear that the President's only plan for Iraq is to stay the course until he can hand off the war to his successor.

The time for stalling is over. Staying the course is no longer acceptable. It is time for Republicans to join us in charting a new course.

OUR DOMESTIC AUTO INDUSTRY

(Mrs. MILLER of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, there has been a great deal of talk over the years that the Big 3 domestic auto companies have been too generous in providing pay and benefits to their workers which has made them less competitive.

I think it is wrong that these companies that helped, literally helped, create the American middle class have been attacked in such a way, but detractors of our domestic auto industry fail to understand that blatant cheating by foreign competitors and foreign governments on such matters as currency manipulation and piracy of intellectual property distort the marketplace and give foreign companies a competitive advantage. Detractors now want to expand the attack on our domestic auto industry by imposing draconian fuel economy standards that will benefit foreign companies and cost American jobs.

Enough is enough. The American auto companies and the UAW are poised to revolutionize the way health care and other benefits are delivered to autoworkers, retirees, and their family members; and, at the same time, the companies and their incredible scientists are working on new technologies for the vehicles of the future

that will significantly reduce our dependence on foreign oil. Now is not the time for increased government regulation that will simply kill American jobs.

DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS SENDS COLLEGE COST REDUCTION ACT TO THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

(Mr. SIRES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SIRES. Mr. Speaker, elections do make a difference. Last November, Democrats promised that if the American people entrusted us with the control of Congress, one of our top six priorities would be putting college in reach for more Americans.

This week, the Democratic Congress delivers on that promise, sending the College Cost Reduction and Access Act to the President's desk for his signature. The President says he will sign it, which is good news for millions of students and families who are trying to fulfill the American Dream.

The landmark legislation is the largest college aid expansion since the GI Bill in 1944. Under the legislation, the maximum Pell Grant scholarship will increase by more than \$1,000 over the next 5 years. More than 5.5 million low- and moderate-income students will receive an immediate boost of almost \$500 in their Pell Grant scholarships. The legislation also cuts interest rates in half on student loans, which will save the average student \$4,400 over the life of the college loan.

Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Congress has delivered on another of our top priorities as we take America in a new direction.

UNNECESSARY DELAY IN PASSING VETERANS APPROPRIATIONS

(Mr. PEARCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to the unnecessary delay in passing this year's veterans appropriations.

This year's veterans appropriations passed with an overwhelming majority in both Houses, 409-2 in this body and 92-1 in the Senate. This kind of bipartisanship makes it clear to all that Congress takes its obligation to our Nation's veterans very seriously.

I sincerely believe America's veterans want to see a final version of veterans funding quickly passed so they may receive the desperately needed funding. However, I feel this will not be the case. Last week, one Democratic aide, asked about this year's veterans appropriations, was quoted in Roll Call saying, "These bills constitute the little bit of leverage we have."

Mr. Speaker, the sacrifices that our young men and women are making in Iraq and Afghanistan are not leverage. The tragedies that occurred at Walter

Reed are not leverage. Veterans health care is not political leverage. We must recognize that veterans funding is critical and should not be used for partisan politics.

I urge my colleagues to rise above the partisan bickering and pass this. Our veterans are demanding: Do not betray us.

COLLEGE COST REDUCTION & ACCESS ACT: DEMOCRATS ACT ON MAKING COLLEGE MORE AFFORDABLE

(Mr. HINOJOSA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, according to the U.S. Department of Education, an estimated 200,000 academically qualified students are not able to go to college every year because they can't afford the cost.

This is a dangerous trend for our Nation, but it is not surprising. Under the Bush administration, prices at public colleges have increased by 40 percent after inflation. And under Republican rule, Pell Grants remained stagnant for 4 years in a row.

When our Democratic majority was elected, we pledged to address this growing crisis, and this week are fulfilling that pledge by sending the College Cost Reduction and Access Act to the President's desk. This important legislation provides the single largest increase in college aid since the GI Bill, increases the maximum Pell Grant over the next 5 years, and cuts interest rates in half on need-based student loans.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation will help millions of students across our Nation afford a college education without saddling themselves with thousands of dollars in debt, and it is the latest example of what the Democratic Congress is doing.

SCHIP

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a strong supporter of the State Children's Health Insurance Program, SCHIP, and I support a responsible reauthorization of this very successful program.

Everybody knows it is going to expire on September 30, unless Congress passes reauthorizing legislation by this date. However, the Democrat leadership in the House and the Senate have been unsuccessful in completing the package.

I am proud today to stand as an original cosponsor of legislation that would reauthorize SCHIP for a period of 18 months. By reauthorizing the program for an additional 18 months, we are taking the politics out of SCHIP policy and protecting the children who